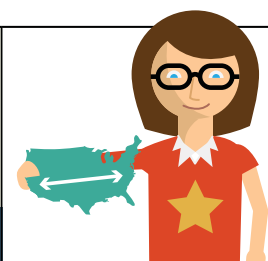


SEIZING OPPORTUNITY AT THE TOP

REACHING EVERY STUDENT WITH EXCELLENT TEACHERS

POLICYMAKERS' CHECKLIST



Research continues to confirm that without *excellent* teachers consistently, most students who start behind stay behind, and too few middling and advanced students leap ahead. Even solid teachers who achieve one year of learning progress leave achievement gaps intact. Schools that *consistently* provide all students with excellent teachers—those in today's top 20 to 25 percent who achieve well over one year of learning progress—can close most gaps fast.

Rigorous recruitment, development, and retention, and necessary dismissals will improve teaching. Among other nations making education surges, the most common practice has been to limit who can teach to their top high school or college students who also exhibit other qualities needed for great teaching. U.S. states could and should follow their lead. But this alone would not be adequate in our economy, absent paid career advancement that makes the teaching profession attractive to more top candidates.

To ensure that every student has access to an excellent teacher in nearly every class, states and districts must also help excellent teachers “extend their reach.” Reach extension uses job redesign and technology to free excellent teachers’ time to reach more students, for more pay, with available budgets. Reach extension also creates new roles for other teachers to learn from the best, contribute to excellent student learning immediately, and pursue career advancement, too.

WHAT POLICY LEADERS CAN DO

How can state and district leaders create policies that help excellent teachers reach more students? By better identifying top teachers; freeing schools and districts to redesign jobs; paying excellent teachers more; proactively retaining top teachers; and building instructional and data systems, policymakers can put excellent teachers in front of more students—*consistently*, and *within budget*.

IDENTIFY EXCELLENT TEACHERS

- ❑ **Require districts to identify the teachers in the state's top 25 percent**, in all grades of high-priority subjects, using multiple measures, including student learning growth as the main element. Untested grades and subjects in which policymakers want students to make strong progress will need new or alternative growth measures.
- ❑ **Identify alternative measures of teacher performance**—such as behavioral competencies—that correlate with student growth and with success in traditional and new teaching roles. This will aid in the identification of excellent teachers, development of all teachers, and appropriate promotion along new career paths.
- ❑ **Require reporting of the number of children in different subgroups reached** by teachers with different levels of prior effectiveness.

REDESIGN ORGANIZATIONS AND JOBS TO INCREASE EXCELLENT TEACHERS' REACH

- ❑ **Provide state funding for schools as fungible lump sums**, including funding for teacher pay. This will allow schools to pay for the best combination of teaching roles and technology.
- ❑ **Eliminate class-size limits for excellent teachers**; or, require aver-

age class-size limits across districts or schools, rather than absolute limits per classroom. This lets willing, top teachers teach more students.

- ❑ **Eliminate or reduce “seat time” requirements for students to be with licensed staff**, focusing on student outcomes instead. This will allow, for example, unlicensed staff to monitor digital labs, freeing funds to pay more—within budget—to the excellent teachers in charge.
- ❑ **Revise licensure rules to make excellent out-of-state teachers automatically eligible to teach.**

PAY EXCELLENT TEACHERS MORE

- ❑ **Amend statewide salary scales**, leaving districts and schools free to pay excellent teachers more for reaching more students within available budgets.
- ❑ **Implement state-level incentives** for schools and districts that reach more students with excellent teaching and share rewards with those teachers.
- ❑ **Pay more per pupil for achieving student growth** on par with that produced by today's teachers in the top 25 percent. Weight the rewards to pay more for learning growth by disadvantaged children, up to and beyond basic proficiency.

PROACTIVELY RETAIN TOP TEACHERS AND OFFER MULTIPLE, FUNDED CAREER ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- ❑ **Grant absolute protection to excellent teachers during layoffs**, regardless of seniority. For example, guarantee protection to teachers who had top-25 percent results for two of the past three years or the most recent year.
- ❑ **Give schools and districts full flexibility to establish (and pay for) advanced roles**, within budget.
- ❑ **Make tenure meaningful via “elite tenure,”** offered only to consistently excellent teachers who then can be empowered to choose their peers.

BUILD INSTRUCTIONAL AND DATA SYSTEMS

- ❑ **Provide universal wireless broadband access** for all students, to enable digital instruction combined with teacher-led instruction.
- ❑ **Invest in data and instructional information systems** to monitor student progress and customize instruction for students.

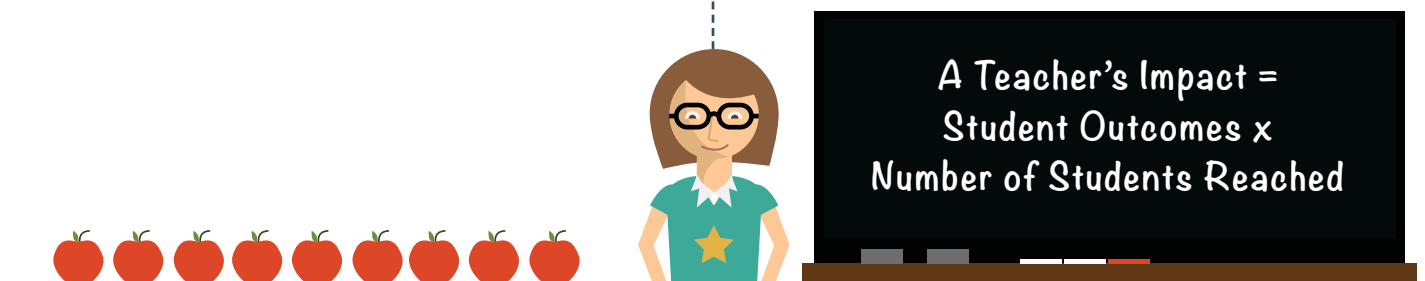
CREATE THE WILL

This is a powerful list. Unfortunately, removing barriers to reaching every child with excellent teachers is unlikely to be sufficient. Policymakers must also **create the will** to give every child excellent teachers, consistently. Dramatic change in the U.S. has historically occurred either as a result of power given to the people in the form

of civil rights, or due to readily available financial rewards for success. To deploy both of these strategies, policymakers can:

- ❑ **Declare a new civil right: access to excellent teachers.** This right would require schools and districts to put excellent teachers in charge of instruction for any student who did not make grade level in the previous school year, did not make at least a year’s worth of growth in a subject in the previous school year, or has not been assigned an excellent teacher in a particular subject during the prior two school years.
- ❑ **Use a new formula to define a teacher’s impact: *Student Outcomes x Number of Students Reached*.** Under this formula, “student outcomes” means how much a teacher’s students learn, measured in part by student growth; “reach” is the number of students receiving instruction delivered or directed by the teacher. Policymakers could induce the use of this formula through changes to teacher-quality reporting requirements and by rewarding successful reach extension financially.

With these changes, policymakers will set the stage for excellent teachers to reach more students, for more pay, within budget. More students will have access to excellent teachers, who close gaps and propel student learning further. And other educators will have opportunities to learn from the best teachers while contributing to excellent student outcomes. It’s what we call an Opportunity Culture.



Learn more at OpportunityCulture.org

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